

CURRICULUM CHANGES - YEARS 11 AND 12

348. Hon BARRY HOUSE to the Minister for Education and Training:

The minister has frequently and adamantly said that she has the support of 90 per cent of parents and teachers for the implementation of curriculum changes in years 11 and 12. In light of the widespread concerns expressed by seemingly everyone, except the minister's departmental head and the Curriculum Council, is the minister still absolutely certain that 90 per cent of parents and teachers support these changes?

The PRESIDENT: There is a bit of argument in that question.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH replied:

Mr President, I am happy to provide a response to that. I guess the estimate is a guesstimate; it may well be a bit more or a bit less. The government has a clear commitment that it will be implementing the 17 courses of study. Although I have come under considerable criticism for a perceived rather than actual lack of flexibility on the introduction of these 17 new courses, the Premier has made it quite clear that these courses will be implemented. I support the Premier and, as Minister for Education and Training, I accept full responsibility for implementation. I became minister on 10 March 2005. Since that time I have made many concessions. I want to put on record some of these concessions, and I ask members of the house to bear with me.

In terms of the timetable for implementation, we were due to implement 30 courses of study in 2007 and the last 10 courses in 2008. The first decision I made was that we could not implement 30, and that we would reduce it to 20 in 2007 and 20 in 2008. Subsequently, I initiated and established the Robson task force. That task force made nine key recommendations, which were fully supported and fully funded. On 29 July a principals' forum was held for all secondary school principals across all sectors to provide feedback on implementation and to examine the recommendations in the report of the task force. On 11 September an announcement was made of an additional \$19 million to fund the implementation of the Robson task force recommendations for professional development, support material and improvements to the moderation process. On 11 September the Curriculum Council announced the introduction of a general achievement test - GAT. On 11 September I announced an additional two professional development days for secondary school teachers, making a total of nine PD days, and one extra day for primary school teachers, taking their total number of PD days to eight. I also made sure that we redistributed the five professional development days at the end of the year across the term so that more systems PD days could be facilitated. On 11 September DET created a section to manage the curriculum and syllabus for government schools. I then moved some courses; for example, I gave a commitment that any course that the ARM - assessment, review and moderation - panel recommended to me should not proceed would not proceed. Of the 20 courses, I agreed not to proceed with religion and life, integrated science and economics. There has been considerable pressure on the matter of assessment. On taking a close look, it was clear to me that there was a very strong focus by teachers who were absolutely preoccupied with assessing every single aspect of every unit of study. We made some recommendations and changes to the WACE - WA Certification of Education - assessment policy that I announced in response to teachers' feedback, making assessment more flexible and simpler, and allowing linking of a numerical score as well as providing a standard for student achievement. This policy was endorsed by TISC - the Tertiary Institutions Service Centre - which means that it was endorsed by all four universities that make up TISC. Then on 11 May 2006 I announced \$20 million in funding, which was secured in the 2006-07 budget, to assist the continued implementation of PD, additional support materials and improvements to the moderation process.

I just say, with all due respect, that I do not believe that is a response from a minister who has not taken into consideration any concern about the implementation of outcomes and standards in education in Western Australia. We have done things over and above that, but that is the broad brushstroke of the response. Yes, we will be continuing to implement the courses of study in accordance with the time frame.